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THINGS NEW AND OLD<sup>1</sup>

I hope it will commend the following remarks to your indulgent attention if we begin with a text from Holy Writ<sup>2</sup>:

Then said He unto them: Therefore every scribe which is instructed unto the Kingdom of Heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old.

This strange and pregnant utterance has a deeper meaning for the religious imagination; but for our secular purpose we may give it a secular interpretation, thus: the student of literature who has digested the *Republic* of Plato is, as it were, a man of unlimited resources, possessing a store of ideas upon which he can always draw for the ends of life. As a collateral text we may cite the advice which the father of Robert, Earl Lytton, gave to his son: 'Do you want to get at new ideas? Read old books. Do you want to find old ideas? Read new ones'.

Professor Hadzsits and Dean West have graciously invited me, doubtless as an exponent of things new—that is, as a teacher of the modern subject of English,—to address you, who in the general mind pass for teachers of things old and permanent—that is, of the Greek and Latin classics; and to discuss with you some topic of common interest to the ancients and the moderns. But since we are all of us, let us hope, instructed scribes, we must straightway admit that the familiar distinction between 'old' and 'new' ordinarily has no scientific value, and as a rule serves only to darken counsel. The 'new' school of Dr. Flexner, for example, is not merely as old as the *Émile* of Rousseau; it is as old, though not so fresh and good, as the philosophy of Epicurus. And the 'new' religion of President Eliot was actually described in advance by Renan in his essay on Channing; in fact, being as old as Stoicism, it is not so new as the New Testament. Accordingly, we ancients and moderns here assembled will mutually admit that the basis of a sound general, and even a religious, education consists, not of things old as such, or of things new as such, but of things that are at once both new and old. In other words, we shall agree that a general education consists in the assimilation of a fund or stock of ideas which by nature are imperishable; of ideas which are potentially the inheritance of every intelligent human being. They are the specific property of no one man or age. They may be acquired by any man or nation through select and industrious reading within the space of forty years or less, if I correctly understand Sir William Osler, though Aristotle would seem to suggest forty-nine years as the proper figure, and Plato fifty. They may all be met and recognized before the age of thirty, to judge from the five years spent by Milton after he left Cambridge, at Horton, and the eight years of reading done by Swift after an unsatisfactory career at Dublin. At all events, one man differs from another,

one period differs from another, in the way each man or period reacts to the common fund of human ideas. Thus a man or an age may possess more or fewer of these ideas, may possess some number of them more or less distinctly, and may possess them in more free or more restricted combination. Novel combination of old ideas is sometimes said to be the mark of genius in a Shakespeare or a Goethe; yet it is clear that wealth of ideas is also a characteristic of originality, as in Plato; and even more important is the habit of sharply distinguishing between one idea and another, and of seeing the sum total of ideas in order and due perspective.

This last quality is characteristic of the New Testament, where we learn that, if we seek first the most important things, or ideas, the others will be added to us—on the principle that to him that hath shall be given. And it is a characteristic of the literary tradition that culminates in Dante, who sifts and unites the gains of the classical and the mediæval spirit, and whose *Vita Nuova* and *Divina Commedia* as a result are strictly the most original productions in literature outside the Scriptures. But it is also a characteristic of Plato.

Wealth of ideas, distinctness of ideas, perspective and emphasis in combining them, these, we may say, are the end and aim of a general or humane education, at least on the intellectual side. If we admit this—and who will deny it?—the main question for the educator, the instructed scribe, then becomes: What are the most effective means of transmitting the largest number of clear and important human ideas in the best perspective? Yet there is another question, or perhaps another form of the same question, which takes precedence of this one, namely: Where are the fullest and most accessible treasures from which the prudent scribe or householder may enrich his son or disciple? We have here in mind, of course, what is termed a literary education, rather than a mathematical or scientific one, and elemental thoughts, rather than their applications and modifications; and the treasures we immediately consider are books—works proceeding from antiquity, or from the Middle Ages, or from the Renaissance and modern times. Indeed, under the Renaissance we must include everything from the end of the Middle Ages down to the present time; for we are still living in the Renaissance—or were until August, 1914. Since then, perhaps, for better as well as worse, for better rather than worse, we have been returning to the ideals of the Middle Ages.

We shall at any rate do wisely if we look for ideas in the place where we are certain to find them. Thus it might not be wise to look for them in the books of the last ten years, or in all the books of any particular ten years in history, where much chaff necessarily hides but little wheat. And again, it may not be wise for the general student to trust to the sources from which a particular man of great ideas extracted his special fund. The books employed by a Bunyan or a Lincoln are likely to include certain volumes of perennial worth; and his choice of teachers is always instructive. But the

<sup>1</sup>An address delivered at the meeting of The Classical Section of the Association of Colleges and Preparatory Schools of The Middle Atlantic States and Maryland, Princeton, November 30, 1918.

<sup>2</sup>Matt. 13:52.

genius of Lincoln, feeding in the main upon a few significant books, was otherwise able to assimilate clarified ideas from sources that might furnish indifferent nourishment to the mind of the average man. In any case, we must discover our fund of ideas somewhere in the past, whether the near past or the more remote. We cannot find them in the present, since we can study the present only when it has gone by and become a part of human experience. As for the future, in which the young people of Illinois and Kansas—and parts of the State of New York—expect to meet new ideas that have not been expressed in old books like the ancient classics, it may be doubted whether we shall shortly be favored with a Plato or a Dante from those parts. It is the simple truth that the source of virtually all the human ideas thus far developed has been one or another part of the civilization that grew up on or near the shores of the Mediterranean. We may even affirm that, however amplified or varied the application of the common stock of ideas has been in the Renaissance, the additions to that stock since the time of Dante are well-nigh negligible. The main development since that time has been of the means of communication and of diffusion—the printing-press, the telegraph and telephone, and various forms of artificial locomotion; there has not been a significant increase in the number or importance of the things to be communicated; nor is 'diffusion' always to be taken in a favorable sense. One may read an entire newspaper in the Sunday edition, or an entire number of a current magazine without finding a single idea of permanent value, well expressed.

We may therefore raise an objection to the customary practice, exemplified in the curriculum of every Protestant school and college, of making a literary training chiefly consist in the perusal of authors belonging to and typical of the Renaissance. Besides the reasons I have suggested for this objection, others may be adduced. For example, since our pupils are living in the Renaissance, they do not escape from themselves through reading these authors; the individual student tends rather to stereotype the ideas which already govern him. Again, the casual reading of the crowd is naturally confined to this period; but education should supply deficiencies, not merely foster desires that will satisfy themselves, once the intellectual curiosity of the individual has been aroused. The notion I wish to convey will be clearer if we turn to a matter of common observation, which is this: the reading of Renaissance authors does not necessarily lead one to the reading of mediæval and classical masterpieces. Thus the man who has read Milton may not have read Dante, and the man who has read Shakespeare may not have read Sophocles; but you will hardly find a student of Sophocles who has not read Shakespeare, or a student of Dante who has not read Milton. Yet again, the more difficult part of education is the acquisition of self-restraint, and the less difficult, the development of one's natural bent. But the typical author of the Renaissance and modern times—a Goethe, a Rousseau—

glorifies individualism, self-assertion, self-expression, self-development; whereas the classical and mediæval authors inculcate self-restraint and self-denial. Finally, what we call bad taste would almost seem to be the invention of the Renaissance and a special property of modern times. The literature of the Middle Ages is on occasion tedious; and the ancient classical authors are not without their faults of style and deficiencies of spirit. But bad taste as we know it in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries—let us say, in *A Lost Chord* of Adelaide Procter—is not to be detected in Plato, or in classical literature as a whole, or in Dante, any more than it is to be found in the New Testament. Were we to subordinate Renaissance to ancient and mediæval writers in the curriculum, we should tend to secure the pupil in his formative stage from the contamination of bad taste. Yielding to none in my love of what is best in Shakespeare and Milton, I am not, of course, aiming at a wholesale condemnation of Renaissance authors, or asserting that they should be uncritically excluded from a rational scheme of studies.

But the superiority of Dante and Plato to any writer of modern times cannot be denied, when we consider each as a grand repository of human ideas. Outside the Sacred Scriptures, these two authors are in this respect incomparable, surpassing the greater or lesser among the encyclopædic minds whose works have been the sources of supply for many a literary reputation—such works, I mean, as those of Cicero, Plutarch, Montaigne, Bacon, Leibnitz, Goethe, or Sainte Beuve. Serviceable as Plutarch has been to a Shakespeare, Montaigne to an Emerson, or Sainte Beuve to a generation of literary critics, or as De Quincey has been to a Ruskin, or Ruskin to many a recent English writer, not one of them will replace Dante or Plato as a treasury of ideas. It is Plato, in fact, with whom we associate the very name of idea. Taken together, these two, Plato and Dante, virtually sum up, compactly, the germinal notions which are possible to human kind.

Yet they have more than wealth and compactness to recommend them. They have also distinctness and perspective or proportion. And these two qualities of distinctness and perspective suggest that the two authors are not merely individual, but also representative. What do they represent?

It would seem that they represent two out of the three greatest literary traditions of all time, in which the wealth and importance of the ideas to be transmitted have been equaled by excellence in the manner of their conveyance. Chief among the three is the tradition of the Old and the New Testament; but this does not enter into the present discussion; though pervasive in its influence upon all subsequent European literature, it has its own special relation to the secular curriculum, being *sui generis*, and a thing apart—in the world, but not of it. Of the other two, one is manifestly the Græco-Roman tradition, beginning with Homer, and culminating in the Attic drama and Plato, yet living on in later Greek poetry and in the poets of Rome. The

other begins in the tenth century with the troubadours of southern France, culminates in Dante, and lives on in Petrarch. For each of the two, the distinctive characteristic is perfection of artistic form developed through an unbroken succession of poets, each learning from his predecessors, striving to advance beyond them, and generally successful in making old things new. Except for the Bible, as in the relation of the later to the earlier psalms, no other literary tradition shows the same excellence arising from close continuity and straightforward progress. No such phenomenon can be observed, for example, in the literature of England, though there is something like it in the progress of Old English poetry from Cædmon to the school of Cynewulf. But subsequently, in their mastery of poetic form the two leaders, Shakespeare and Milton, are, we may contend, aliens to England; for Shakespeare, with all his opulence, attains to artistic perfection, not in his dramas, but in some of his sonnets, which are ultimately Petrarchian; and the artistic mastery of Milton comes not through an orderly development of English literature; from a distance, and after an interval, he strives to combine in one the streams of Mediterranean tradition. He does not, like Dante, or like Plato, live at home in his own native stream of ideas and art. But he could not have done better, and his practice indicates what we should do toward improving the ideals of a literary education: study the Bible—that goes without saying; and otherwise betake ourselves to the schools of Plato and Dante. It was to these that Shelley betook himself (until then a very mediocre poet), thereby enriching his substance, and greatly improving his art.

This is as much as I can now suggest regarding storehouses of ideas—where to hunt for treasures. Let us briefly consider the other question—how most effectively to transmit the fund of ideas to the next and succeeding generations. Time will not let us discuss the mediæval tradition which the best of modern scholars are now engaged in sifting for the future; though to the student of English a study of Germanic and Italian or Romance origins is of more immediate concern than the study of Greek and Latin. Yet classical studies are of vital interest to the teachers of modern literature; when these studies fail, we cannot succeed. Nor could there be a more splendid testimony to the significance of classical scholarship in modern life than the series of recent French monographs upon English authors; for these all derive their method and inspiration from the work of French classical scholars like Boissier and Alfred and Maurice Croiset. In America, however, it would seem that our teachers of Greek and Latin have not in recent years been so helpful to students of English. Indeed, if I may speak for myself, I have had to learn the most needful things in the domain of classical studies either from teachers of English or by myself—such needful things, I mean, as the *Poetics* of Aristotle and the *Encyclopædie* of August Boeckh, which have transformed my conceptions of literary and linguistic

study. Why, we may ask, do American classical scholars make so little use of these books in their teaching—above all, in the training of teachers for the secondary schools? Or, to approach the problem from another angle, why should a bright young woman from the Middle West, one who had read Cæsar and Xenophon, be filled with astonishment, after reading a little of Jowett's Plato for a course in English, that no one had ever before directed her to this fascinating source of vital ideas? Why, thought she, have I been robbed of this needful nourishment? The fault must lie partly in the general conditions of education in America; it also lies in part with our teachers of the classics. Pray bear with me while I complain a little and advise a little on this subject. Faithful are the wounds of a friend.

We teachers of modern literature—of Shakespeare, for example,—have just cause for complaint that our pupils have read Cæsar, and are not familiar with Ovid; since perhaps the main difficulty in the allusions of Shakespeare, and even of Milton, has ceased to exist for a student who has read portions of the *Metamorphoses*. Again, if our Sophomores are so lucky as to have read a little Greek, it has been Xenophon rather than Plato; and hence they cannot understand Shelley. But, strictly speaking, and not to mention Greek, they cannot read Latin at all, one reason being that their teachers in the secondary schools cannot do so either. These teachers, naturally, cannot transmit a habit that they do not possess, and will never inspire a class with the faith that it can do what is not done. But why should not a teacher of the classics in the high school read classical authors wholesale, as his or her colleague in French or German reads authors in either of these tongues? Sympathize though we may with the difficulties under which classical teachers labor in this country, it is the simple truth that, with nearly all the best cards—the most fascinating authors—in their hands, they have not known how to play the game. They continue to assign the reading of the Gallic War, and the orations against Catiline, which vitally interest but a few boys, and almost no girls, and they withhold Ovid, who would interest all. And they insist upon Xenophon, who, if not always prosy, is yet as prosy as a Greek can be. And why do they insist? Because, forsooth, he writes Attic Greek that is not too hard! Meanwhile these pupils are bereft of the natural pleasure and stimulus which come from the habit of continuous reading; though if you make the Greek or Latin easy enough, and interesting enough, it is as possible to acquire the habit for either of these as for French or German. You must, of course, have teachers who can and do read books and authors in the languages they profess to teach. But you must also see to it that, with some intensive study for the sake of grammar and syntax, there goes much extensive reading on the part of the class. Let us not be afraid of the methods of those who teach the modern languages. It is better also to read one book of the *Odyssey* in the original, and the rest in the translation

of Butcher and Lang, than two books of the original and nothing more.

I sing of things old and new. For years we have been facing changed conditions in teaching Greek and Latin; and the present, they say, is a critical time for Greek. The classical teachers appear to realize that they are in a predicament; but what have they done, what are they doing, about it? Very likely more than I have heard of, but surely not enough; for more is needed than a general campaign of advertising to awaken a heedless public, more than eloquent replies to Dr. Flexner and his school, more than Latin exhibitions in the halls of a public school. I am far from underrating the value of such efforts, or the admirable spirit of those persons who make them. More important, however, are the results attained in certain textbooks like Professor Goodell's *The Greek in English*, *The First Year of Greek* by Professor Allen, and the Latin readers projected by Professor Clark and his coadjutor, Mr. Game. But all these enterprises, so far as they are known to me, are in certain ways too much of a concession, and in certain ways too little. With all deference to scholars who know far more of Greek and Latin than I can ever hope to know, let me nevertheless as a teacher of English assume that we need a new Greek Lesson-book and Reader, say a volume of six or seven hundred pages; and a similar volume for beginning Latin. The principles governing these books I trust we should all agree to. The details should be worked out by experts, though in each case, perhaps, under the guidance of a single editor; what I say of these details must be regarded as mainly tentative or rather suggestive, and in no sense final and complete. In the volume for Latin there should be, first of all, such minimum of grammar and syntax as is indispensable for any progress at all in reading. But it must be strictly a minimum. We must, for our beginners, have less grammar at the outset, though what is given will have to be thoroughly mastered in a few weeks, with constant reference back and forth from numbered point in the text to numbered point in the grammar. But it must always be remembered that the main difficulty is not grammar or syntax, but vocabulary; this is true of all languages, it is true of Greek and Latin. Much grammar should be reserved until later in the first year, some until the following year, and some until after the day of judgment. For the rest, there should be several hundred pages of easy, interesting, and as far as possible connected reading; and reading should begin at the second meeting of the class. Among the earlier passages in the book there should be some for memorizing; here the Latin should of course be pure, but the order as near as possible to that of English; these should be accompanied by close and exact translations into natural English, the translations to be memorized. It is astonishing how much of a foreign language can be quickly learned by this means, and how many important grammatical and syntactical forms can thus be acquired in advance of the learning of paradigms. Meanwhile the teacher has texts of

reference for points of usage, not vaguely placed somewhere in a book, but clearly written in the mind of his pupil. In the first fifty or one hundred pages there should be a great deal of narrative adapted from the more familiar parts of the Bible in the Vulgate; additions might be made from apocryphal accounts of the childhood of Christ, in Latin, of course. I know of nothing which the average student reads with more avidity. But the book as a whole should contain mostly narrative, drawn from Ovid, Virgil, and such things as the Dream of Scipio. Surely this last is more attractive to the youthful mind than are the orations against Catiline; as indeed it might be well to throw over all the orations of Cicero in favor of his letters, if our aim is to enlist the interest of the pupil on the side of his own education. There would be no objection to observing the principle of progressive difficulty, as we advanced toward the end of the book; but the main principle should be (if you will pardon the German): *Lesen; viel lesen; viel, viel lesen*. In fact, difficult passages should for the most part be simplified by the editor; glosses and side-notes, even interlinear translations, should be supplied where difficulties cannot be avoided or excised, and summaries of omitted intervening passages should be given in English; the editor and his helpers should virtually rewrite a large part of the Latin in the volume. The book might thus include the whole story of the Aeneid, which is criminally treated when but the first half or third is read without reference to the end. If it be necessary to rewrite Virgil, using his own words where possible, and to print the paraphrase as normal Latin prose, by all means let Virgil be rewritten. This would not preclude the occasional insertion of metrical excerpts, or the learning of them with the help of a teacher who knew the music of the Virgilian lines. If the Latin of the Vulgate, or if other mediæval Latin, be not pure enough for the purists, let the editor improve it, so long as he does not make the order more difficult. But as I have suggested, much editorial effort should be devoted to reducing the Latin, wherever possible, to the order of the modern languages—which happens to be the order of Greek also. Finally there should be a full glossary. I have said nothing of written composition; exercises might, or might not, be included in the same volume. There is no reason why several books should not be employed in a course. Were I teaching Latin, I should expect my students to read a certain amount of Latin literature in the first year in the best English translations. And the same thing would be true were I teaching Greek.

For the Greek Grammar and Reader, all in one, a similar procedure should be followed. The selections should be made into continuous reading. Passages of significant and connected discourse should be memorized with their English translations. Homer and Herodotus should be freely excerpted and adapted, virtually atticized perhaps, the chief difficulties being removed or glossed. Many inflected forms should be recognized as individual words before they are seen in the artificial

order of the paradigms. I for one, should omit the *Anabasis* of Xenophon altogether, whatever the injury to existent text-books and current royalties. Certain easier passages from Plato should be included; some of the more significant myths, with the difficulties removed or glossed; perhaps one or two of the shorter, less abstruse dialogues, with an argument at the beginning of each, and occasional summaries, in English. As in the Latin Reader, narrative portions of the Bible should come near the beginning, with occasional rewriting or rewording of the Old Testament in the Septuagint and of the New Testament. Here, again, the apocryphal accounts of the childhood of Christ might be used to great advantage. And as some of the simpler Latin hymns might be included in the Latin Reader, so, perhaps, certain of the simpler Greek hymns here. And again there should be a full Greek and English glossary.

Do the proposals you have heard seem unduly novel? Since writing them down, I have discovered, or rediscovered, a paper by Andrew Lang, on *Homer and the Study of Greek*, that I wish I might have quoted in full, since it sustains with force and skill the main positions I have just been upholding. Let me give novelty to this occasion by reading a few brief passages from one who did much to vivify our times through the vital things of the past. To what he says of grammar you will hear an echo from within. And what he says of Homer is mostly applicable to Plato as well. I quote:

At present boys are introduced to the language of the Muses by pedantically written grammars, full of the queerest and most arid metaphysical and philological verbiage. The very English in which these deplorable books are composed may be scientific, may be comprehensible by and useful to philologists, but is utterly heartbreaking to boys. . . . The grammar, to them, is a mere buzz in a chaos of nonsense. . . . When they struggle so far as to be allowed to try to read a piece of Greek prose, they are only like the Marchioness in her experience of beer; she once had a sip of it. Ten lines of Xenophon, narrating how he marched so many parasangs and took breakfast, do not amount to more than a very unrefreshing sip of Greek. . . . The boys straggle along with Xenophon, knowing not whence or whither. . . . One by one they fall out of the ranks; they mutiny against Xenophon; they murmur against that commander; they desert his flag. They determine that anything is better than Greek, that nothing can be worse than Greek, and they move the tender hearts of their parents. . . . Up to a certain age my experiences at school were precisely those which I have described. Our grammar was not so philological, abstruse, and arid as the instruments of torture employed at present. But I hated Greek with a deadly and sickening hatred; I hated it like a bully and a thief of time. . . . Then we began to read Homer; and from the very first words, in which the Muse is asked to sing the wrath of Achilles, Peleus' son, my mind was altered, and I was the devoted friend of Greek. Here was something worth reading about; here one knew where one was; here was the music of words, here were poetry, pleasure, and life. We fortunately had a teacher (Dr. Hodson) who was not wildly enthusiastic about grammar. He would set us long pieces of the Iliad or Odyssey to learn, and, when the day's task was done, would make us read on adventuring ourselves in 'the unseen', and construing as gallantly

as we might, without grammar or dictionary. On the following day we surveyed more carefully the ground we had pioneered or skirmished over, and then advanced again. Thus, to change the metaphor, we took Homer in large draughts, not in sips: in sips no epic can be enjoyed. . . . The result was not the making of many accurate scholars, though a few were made; others got nothing better than enjoyment in their work, and the firm belief, opposed to that of most schoolboys, that the ancients did not write nonsense. . . . Judging from this example I venture very humbly to think that any one who, even at the age of Cato, wants to learn Greek, should begin where Greek literature, where all profane literature begins—with Homer himself. It was thus, not with grammars *in vacuo*, that the great scholars of the Renaissance began. It was thus that Ascham and Rabelais began, by jumping into Greek and splashing about till they learned to swim.

This stimulating author then proceeds to explain his method for actual beginners in Homer; but since his method is in keeping with the one we have in mind for our projected books in Greek and Latin, we need not enlarge upon the topic here. It will be seen that in both volumes one main principle is the governing conception, namely this: the business of education is the transmission of ideas. Language is primarily to be regarded as a means of communication, and not as an end in itself.

Finally, we teachers of things new and old will do well to bear in mind that we are in a world where reality is permanent, and its appearance constantly changing. We must therefore be inflexible where reality is concerned, and flexible when change becomes necessary; for we may properly regard ourselves as co-workers with One who saith: 'Behold, I make all things new'.

CORNELL UNIVERSITY.

LANE COOPER.

## REVIEW

Musa Americana, Second Series. Home Songs in Latin Set to Popular Melodies. With English Text. By Anthony F. Geyser, S. J. Chicago: Loyola University Press (1919). Pp. 47.

The First Series of Father Geyser's *Musa Americana*, containing a collection of patriotic songs in Latin, was reviewed in *THE CLASSICAL WEEKLY* 12.183-184. The present series includes lyrics on a variety of subjects: The Last Rose of Summer, Rocked in the Cradle of the Deep, Home Sweet Home, The Harp That Once Through Tara's Halls, Sweet and Low, Oft in the Stilly Night, The Old Oaken Bucket, To a Robin, Erin! The Tear and the Smile in Thine Eyes, Baby Mine, The Meeting of the Waters, Anchored, Massa's in de Cold Ground, Lead, Kindly Light, The Four Seasons (four original poems), and two Campion College songs.

The author realizes (4) the difficulties that . . . arise from the vast differences of idiom, from the limitations of Latin poetic diction, and, last but not least, from the severe restrictions imposed upon the

<sup>1</sup>Since this paper is to be reprinted as a pamphlet, it has been set in details of types, punctuation, etc., not according to the style sheet of *THE CLASSICAL WEEKLY*, but according to the preferences of the author. C. K.